Scott. II-27—100,006—21-5-53.

FOOD. (1954 49) Department.

H8 SERIES.

G.O. No. 129

129.

Dated 2.2.49

[Despatch Abstract.]

Sub:- Rationing - Madras Province - Individual card - system viz. Family card system - Papers Recorded.

Notes

Secretary, Food.

I hear that in Bombay ration card is issued individually to every person and wherever he goes he presents his card and gets the ration. Here in Madras the system is different. A report has got to be submitted about new admissions and they have to be separately given rations. Here the family is the unit. Please find out whether the Bombay system cannot be adopted here also.

I presume there is a file dealing with it. Please put it up.

(sd) x x
22.11.48.

Food Department (B)

To Deputy Secretary:

Please see the minute of Hon'ble Minister (Food) above. Individual card system-versus-Family card system was examined by the Madras Government as early as 1943. The Foodgrains Policy Committee appointed by the Government of India in 1943 recommended that in large cities individual ration cards should be issued in preference to family cards. The remarks of the Bee recommendation was endorsed by the Government of India. The remarks of the Board of Revenue (C.S) in the matter and the reply sent to Government of India in 1944 are at pp. 11-14 of (E). The following are the main reasons for the adoption of family card system in the Madras Province in preference to individual card system:-

1. Rations are always purchased on a family basis and it will be inconvenient for the head of a family to have a large number of cards on his hands.

2. Individual cards will throw more work on the retail dealers. Separate entries will have to be made in the sales register in respect of issue of rations on each card. They will also throw more work on the officers who check the work of retail dealers.

3. Individual cards will involve the issue of 5 or 6 times the number of existing cards and a corresponding increase in the use of paper in all directions. In view of the scarcity of paper this is undersirable. Further this will throw more work on the Press and on the rationing office and there will be considerable extra expenditure to Government.

It was claimed that that the system of individual ration cards had two main advantages viz:-

(1) That the risk of persons drawing rations for those absent from the rationed area is little.

(2) That indigent families would be able to purchase their weekly ration on different days in a week utilising each ration card separately.

With reference to item one, so far as this province is concerned timely steps were taken even in the early stages of rationing to let people know that they should not draw rations for persons who are absent from the rationed area. Frequent house to-house enquiries are also being made by the Rationing officers and their subordinates to ensure that these instructions are

obeyed by the people. Besides the health officers of rationed areas have been directed to send extracts from the death registers to the Rationing officers concerned every week and action is then taken by the Rationing officers to reduce the rations suitably. There is little risk of drawal of rations for absentees.

The second advantage ø is already met by the family ration card now adopted by this Government Indigent families can draw rations on different days in a week on the ration card now adopted in this Province. It may therefore be observed that the advantageous in individual card system are not greater than the advantageous in a family card system. There are no other papers with the Government on the subject. For orders whether it will be considered necessary to call for the remarks of the Board in the matter now. If it is considered unnecessary the file may be circulated to Hon'ble Minister (Food) for orders i on the above note.

(Sd) x x/29.11.48.

This question had been considered more than once in the past at the instance of the Government of India. The individual card system has been in use in the Bombay Province from the very incipience of the rationing system, and the Government of India have found this system very efficient and commended it to the other Provinces and States for adoption. But while agreeing that as a whole the individual card system was more thorough and efficient than the family card system, most of the other Provinces and States particularly the South were not willing to work this system on account of its being too complicated and also in view of the high cost involved. It is understood that in 1945 the rationing scheme worked with individual card system cost almost about a rupee a head in the Bombay Province, while here the cost is estimated at only a few annas per head. It is this prohibitive cost, the vast quantity of paper, stationery etc. that will be involved the much larger staff that would have to be entertained to work up the system that mainly stand in the way of the adoption of individual card system. Even in the Bombay Province, in the rural areas of small towns, the family card system is adopted. The individual card system is used for big towns and cities only.

Now that we have worked the family ration card system throughout the Province for the last about 4 or 5 years, with a fair amount of efficiency in spite of certain drawbacks inherent to this system, it does not at this stage seem worthwhile to change over to the individual card system.

(Sd) x x /2.12.48.

In spite of the vigilance of the rationing staff and the health staff I am sure there are still a large number of bogus cards in existence. On the whole, I am inclined to think that the individual card system is likely to effect a reduction in offtake. We may perhaps make a trial in respect of one or two terms and watch the result. Of the bigger municipalities, I would suggest Salem. The Board may be asked to suggest a small Municipality where rationing is already in existence. Anyway let us consult the Board whether it would not be advisable to conduct any such experiment in regard to one to two selected municipalities.

(Sd) x x/3.12.48.

/3

To the Deputy Secretary:

on page ante With reference to orders of Secretary above a draft memo to Board is submitted.

Received.
(Sd) x x/7.12.48.

Issued as Memorandum No. 51302B/48-1, dated 7.12.48.
From the Board of Revenue (CS) ref. 15655/1/48-1, dated 10.1.49.

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To D.S.

The notes from page 1 ante may be perused. The Board of Revenue (C.S.) considers that it is not worthwhile to launch on an experiment over the individual card system now for the following reasons:-

(a) The family card system had been working satisfactorily for nearly three years.

(b) Experience will disprove the view that individual card system would give little room for the existence of bogus cards and consequently reduce the offtake. Bogus cards come into existence on the following ways:-

(i) Applications are put in the names of fictitious persons with the connivance or negligence of the Enquiry Officers of Rationing Department, These applications are got passed and cards obtained in the names of persons who are not actually in existence.

(ii) Families while leaving the town fail to surrender their cards, but give them over to their neighbours who use these cards till the absence of the families is found out by the Checking staff and intimation sent to the retailers to stop issue of rations.

(iii) When a certain member or members of a family leave the town, the head of the family delays reporting their departure and having the ration reduced. This goes on till their absence is found out by the Checking staff which may at times be several months after their departure. The same thing happens in respect of members who have died.

These things will continue to exist whether there is family card system or individual card system and mere change over to the individual card system may not alter the anti-social behavious of the irresponsible section of the public or facilitate checking of these malpractices. The existence of 94000 bogus cards in Delhi in 1947 where individual card system was in force bears out the above argument.

(c) Individual card system apart from not being able to produce any better results is bound to involve a heavy expenditure. Taking on an average 5½ persons for a family, the present family cards should be increased five times. In these days of scarcity of paper there would be great difficulty in finding the quantity of paper required for the purpose. There would be a corresponding increase in expenditure for printing etc. It will also involve five times the labour in writing up of these cards and attending to the surrender and issue of new cards when persons leave and come into the town. The work of the retailers will also be increased correspondingly. Thus the scriptory work all round will increase five fold.

In the circumstances explained it is for

/4

consideration whether the question of experimenting the individual card system in one or two towns will be dropped. The file may be circulated to Hon'ble Minister (Food) for orders.

(Sd) x x/21.1.49.

Though the Board's argument that a change to the 'individual card system' may not alter the anti-social behaviour of the irresponsible section of the public and that malpractices will continue even under the 'individual card system' might be accepted, there is no doubt of the fact that 'individual card system' will minimise the evil. But correct conclusions could be drawn only after experimenting in one or two places. But the Board is not even for launching any such experiment. As already noted by me at page 2 ante., since our 'family card system' has been now working for the last four or five years with some efficiency, it does not seem worthwhile to switch over now to a new system.

(Sd) x x x/24.1.49.

On the whole, there are no strong reasons for giving up the Family card system in favour of the Individual card System. The small advantage which is likely to arise out of the latter, will be more than offset by increased expenditure on stationery, printing and staff. Our present system may therefore continue.

(Sd) x x/28.1.49.

We may carry on with the present family card system.

(sd) x x/10.1.49.

To the Deputy Secretary:

A draft memo to the Board is submitted. After issue the papers may be recorded.

G.O.Ms. No. 129, dated 2.2.49.

Rationing - Madras Province - Individual card system - viz. - Family card system - Papers - Recorded.

(Sd) x x x
Secretary to Government.

/True copy/

Superintendent,
Madras Record Office.

mr. 5.8.

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6/8